

LIMERICK SOCIALIST

AUGUST, 1978.

10p

VOL. 7. NO. 8.

THE
VOICE
OF THE
WORKER

That which is good for the working class I believe is good for the country.



THE PARK DANES



PENNYWELL

CONTRACEPTION - WILL GOD CHANGE HIS MIND?

BY JOHN KEANE

The condemnation of birth control by 'artificial' means is a fundamental policy of the Roman Catholic Church. The uncompromising stand taken by the church has placed it out of line, not only with the thinking and practice of non-catholics, but with a majority of its own members throughout the world.

The church's teaching on the matter has been challenged and rejected by millions of Catholics. Why, then, in the light of this situation has the church continued to hold firm to its discredited position? Is it from a basic tenet of belief that contraception is in itself an evil or degenerate practice which lowers the moral and physical well-being of people? This attitude, often advanced by apologists, has now been abandoned by the church itself. The Billings and rhythm methods are approved as being "natural" and 'non-artificial'.

But to all other forms of contraceptives the church has maintained its stubborn, implacable opposition. Why has it held out against the overwhelming opinion of Catholics and other Christians? In his book, *The Politics of the Vatican*, Peter Nichols examines this question and attempts to explain it as a decision based, not on religious or moral principles, but on political expediency, designed to protect its own authority.

In a chapter dealing with contraception, Nichols outlines the problems confronting the church and the difficulties presented to Pope Paul:

And yet a pope can scarcely watch inactively the process by which the Roman Catholic faithful are abandoning in large numbers any attempt to live by the traditional teaching in the very heart of religious and social life, the family. This teaching has been challenged by new ideas about the nature of marriage, by the development of new contraceptive techniques, and by what can only be called the demands of the age on individuals and nations alike, as the menace grows of too great an increase of population in relation to the estimated supply of food. Overpopulation and underdevelopment both lead inevitably to the question of birth control. As part of its international aspirations, the church has set itself to contribute to solving the problems of poor and developing nations. Yet, with all this contribution it brings a teaching that condemns millions to poverty in backward countries and millions in advanced countries to nervous breakdowns or to plain rejection of that teaching.

Birth control by "artificial" methods has been condemned by successive popes throughout recent history. The most explicit statement was made by Pope Pius XI, on December 31st, 1930, in his encyclical *Casti Connubii*. The document states:

"The Catholic Church, to which God himself has committed the integrity and decency of morals now standing in the ruin of morals, raises her voice aloud through our mouths, in sign of her divine mission, in order to keep the chastity of the nuptial bond from this foul lapse, and again promulgates . . . Any use whatever of marriage, in the exercise of which the act by human effort is deprived of its natural power of procreating life, violates the law of God and nature and those who do such a thing are stained by a grave and mortal fault."

Any one who reads the Vatican's announcements on other issues will find the above statement very clear and unequivocal; it was a pronouncement made by a pope in relation to the church's interpretation of the moral law and, as such, was taken as a statement of papal infallibility.

The Catholic Church's view on contraception was again

reiterated in May 1964 when Monsignor (later Cardinal) Heenan issued a statement on behalf of the English and Welsh hierarchies in which he said:

It has even been suggested that the church could argue the practice of contraception. But the church, while free to revise her own positive laws, has no power of any kind to alter the laws of God . . . Contraception is not an open question, for it is against the laws of God.

Later on in the same chapter Peter Nichols describes the setting up of a special commission by Pope Paul. The commission had 6 members, later enlarged to 52 in March 1965, when it held its first plenary session. Nichols writes:

Paul's commission was an international body, 9 members from Belgium and Italy, 2 each from Canada, England, India, Japan, the Netherlands and Spain, and 1 each from Brazil, Chile, Jamaica, Madagascar, the Philippines, Senegal, Switzerland and Tunisia; 19 were theologians, 15 were demographers or economists, twelve were doctors and 6 were married representatives of the laity. There were 5 women members. Above this advisory body the pope placed a committee of bishops, presided over by Cardinal Ottaviani, which was to look at the commission's report before passing it on to the pope.

Nichols then goes on to give an account of what the commission favoured and the approximate strength of the voting: "A large majority, including a small majority of bishops, 9 for, 5 against, elected for change, i.e. a relaxation of the laws". The report plus recommendations for change were given to the pope in June 1966. The pope was advised to make his first step towards relaxation on the 29th October 1966, when he was due to receive a group of gynaecologists in audience.

In the event, he did nothing of the kind. He rejected the majority reports as unsatisfactory, stating that more studies would be required. He emphasised that the church's traditional teaching remained in force and that it could not be regarded as being in any way in doubt as a result of the commission's findings. Critics of the pope claimed that he had made nonsense of the doctrine of episcopal collegiality. It was pointed out that, having appointed a group of eminent bishops to consider his commission's recommendations, the pope had rejected the results of their work as inadequate.

The majority report in its proposals for change attempted to base its arguments on a factual view of the situation. But the argument which made up the pope's mind was the case made by the minority of conservative bishops. An extract from the minority report states:

If the church should now admit that the teaching passed on is no longer of value, teaching which had been preached and stated with ever more insistent solemnity until very recent years, it must be feared greatly that its authority in almost all moral and dogmatic matters will be seriously harmed. For there are few moral truths so constantly, solemnly and, as it has appeared, definitely stated as this one for which it is now so quickly proposed that it be changed to the contrary. What is more, however, this change would inflict a grave blow on the teaching about the assistance of the Holy Spirit, promised to the church to lead the faithful on the right way towards their salvation. For, as a matter of fact, the teaching of Casti Connubii Lambeth Conference of 1930 by the church to whom God has intrusted the defence of the integrity and purity of morals . . . in token of her divine ambassadorship . . . and through our mouth. It is, nevertheless, now to be admitted that the church erred in this her work and that the

Holy Spirit now assists the Anglican Church.

The reference to the Lambeth Conference of 1930 in the statement is significant. This conference eased the opposition of Anglicans to contraception. Thus it can be clearly seen that the argument that decided the pope's mind had nothing to do with religious, humanist, logical or moral thinking: it was taken on the naked grounds of political expediency of not being seen to be imitating or following in the wake of the Anglican Church. The Catholic's Church's decision flew in the face of the commission's recommendations and the practice of millions of its members, and, once again, divine authority was invoked to justify the position.

But, even amongst the clergy, there was dissent. The theologian, Father Gregory Baum, said: "As we produce our arguments we feel strongly uncomfortable. The awful thought comes to mind that we may be pushing millions of people into

conditions of misery just because we do not want to admit that we were wrong".

During the permissive sixties, sexual standards became more relaxed and the church feared that a general breakdown in the moral code was about to take place. The church badly needed to assert its authority and *Humanae Vitae* was the result. The encyclical has been described as the perfect landing at the wrong airport, in the manner in which it evaded reality.

But for how long can the pope continue to be the arbiter of how families should be planned? For now long more can the church hold out against the pressures of the modern world? Will the members of the church have to wait until there is a divine change of attitude to give the pope an opportunity to change his interpretation of divine authority? In other words, how long will it be before God will be allowed to change his mind?

FOR SALE

— FROM THE WEXFORD BONE COLLECTION.

BY WILLIAM ENGLISH

the burring sound
of the aircontrol,
still the humid air,
the languid people
passing to and fro,
stopping here.
to look and stare,
consult the catalogue
then go —
"Nude I"

—from the Wexford Bone Collection.

They meet friends
of former exhibitions,
exchange hats,
ties and cloaks,
admire each other,
gossip,
respect the same old jokes.

Here in this alcove,
so neatly placed,
a pastel —
"unique" . . . "brave"!
and here,
"Man of Castile"
"how divine, I do declare",
—from the Wexford Bone Collection.

They gather round the wine
and cheese,
gossip and drink.
cough and sneeze,
clearly exhibit
their total indifference
towards those they do not know,
waiting for the opening,
the same long waiting,
the selfsame opening,
as of old,
only a few words
change hands,
few paintings sold.

"Man of La Mancha,
oil, abstract".
"My word,
£240 . . . too much!
. . . absurd"

Feet shuffle,
hands toil,
glasses clatter,
bodies clutter,
waiting . . .
an half-hour,
and our distinguished person
arrives to open,
what has been closed!

"Ladies and gentlemen,
I question
this exhibition,
but I . . .
I am liberal.
all art
is part of life,
all expression
progresses towards
self confession,
and the lie
I, do not understand.
I stare,
lest colours and shapes
fuse,
and project to me
life's mystery.
I care,
for art,
I am elected to know.
I declare
this exhibition open —
sorry, must dash,
to the Antique Fair,
You know,
—from the Wexford Bone Collection."

With apologies to Marc Brandel!

THE PARK DANES

PARK IN POETRY

Like many other communities, the history of the people of Park is an oral one and, except for a few brief references in Lenihan's "History of Limerick", little has been written about their way of life. Michael Hogan, the Bard of Thomond, went to live in Park in November 1867, but his experience there was not conducive to writing. The winter was an unusually cold one, with north-east winds, heavy frost and snow. The house in which the Bard lived was a new one with only a light coating of thatch. The fresh walls wept constantly and fires had to be kept lighted day and night in a vain effort to keep the house warm. The poet was soon laid low with a severe attack of rheumatism and "burned in joint and limb" for seven weeks. With characteristic and bitter finality, Hogan wrote: "It was the first and last winter I spent in Park, right on the ecciastical premises of the Right Rev. George Butler, the mitred millionaire".

The Bard's memories of the Garden of Limerick were, therefore, not rosy ones. Two years afterwards, with the wintry chill of Park barely banished from his bones, Hogan wrote his fourth "Shawn-a-Scoob" pamphlet. In one of the most scathing lampoons in this work he describes the "Park Deputation", a delegation of members of the Limerick Town Council to the bishop at his Park palace, on the return of Dr. Butler from a visit to London. Perhaps the poet was trying to exorcise the unhappy memories, still burning in his mind if not in his body, when he poured out his invective on the red-robed councillors. In the poem he reserves his most violent vituperation for two members, the Mayor Thomas Joyce (Tom Scoob) and the historian Maurice Lenihan (Maurice

Birch):

*Tom Scoob led the van of the sycophant squadron,
Such a captain ne'er figured in old times nor modern;
The scant bit of ermine that clothed and crowned him,
Just looked like a gipsy's red pettycoat round him;
A Park woman saw him – she pillilued and fainted,
For she thought 'twas the devil in oil-colours painted.*

*But Tom is as trained to the science of dodging,
As a spaniel at fetching or gipsy at cadging,
He has a devil of a coal-hole in Patrick's Well,
As deep as the Tartarean kitchen of hell:
And three times a day he peeps into the hole,
To watch the increase of his tribute of coal;
That coal which in town ought to be given to the poor,
Tom sends it home bagged and packed tight and secure.*

*But now I'll return to the Park Deputation,
And finish my spice of their peregrination.
Well, on they manoeuvred, the phalanx of ruffians,
And they seemed like a regiment of red ragamuffins;
Maurice Birch, like the ghost of MacBeth 'mid his fellows,
Looked as white as a thief on his way to the gallows.
Oh, to see his fish-face, like a dim churchyard candle,
How ghostly it shone o'er his flaming red mantle;
For the spectral complexion the ermine imparted
Made him seem like a corpse from death's prison deserted.*



A PARK SCENE

Now the Sand Mall they pass, and Park Bridge they soon enter,
But they come to a sudden standstill in the centre;
Hark! hush! – What the doul on the bridge can delay 'em? –
Holy Job! 'tis the Silver Bells ringing Te Deum!
Up rolled from the water their weird vibration
Of music saluting the grand Deputation
Of pawnbrokers, pork-sellers, whiskey retailers,
Tobacconists, scribes – every section but sailors.

But another poet took a more sympathetic view of Park. Canon Ross Lewin, a minor Anglo-Irish writer who extolled the glorious victories of the British Empire in his poetry, was stirred to write a poem in praise of the Parkmen's industry. The simple language of "The Men of Park" is used effectively to evoke the quiet mood and sense of timelessness of this hidden Limerick. The poem also contains some enduring images of the patient Parkmen toiling their lives away in the secure shadows of the neo-Gothic stone spire of St. John's Cathedral, beneath the gently sloping hills of Clare.

Shadows of the evening softly fall
On towers and spire, cathedral wall.
Sons of the earth, of toil and moil,
Delving and digging the deep rich soil,
Patiently working from dawn till dark,
Such are the lives of the men of Park.

I've passed them by in the early day,
When the city folk in their slumbers lay,
When the dew shone white on the grassy lawn,
And the cocks 'gan crow at the rising dawn,
And the blithe notes rang from the soaring lark,
And there at their work were the men of Park.

And when at even the vesper bell
Is tolling, tolling – o'er brake and dell,
And the birds are speeding their homeward flight
Seeking for cover ere gath'ring night,
Out in the gardens you still may mark
The toiling, moiling men of Park.

Oh! say not our sons are an idle race –
Thriftless, shiftless, lazy and base,

Industries start to keep them at home,
Never again from their isle to roam,
And stay their flight in the emigrant bark,
To work for their homes like the men of Park.

Alas! too many afar have flown
From the older city and Treaty Stone,
Away far over the ocean tide
In foreign land where waves divide,
Where the strange streams flow yet they fain would hark,
To old Shannon's voice, like the men of Park.

No time for politics labouring there
Neath those lovely, lonely hills of Clare,
Ever and always they seem content,
For hearth, and home, and a well-earned rent,
And rest but comes when they're stiff and stark,
To the sturdy, homely men of Park.

It is somewhat ironic that Ross-Lewin should now be totally forgotten in Limerick except for "The Men of Park". His long out-of-print book, "Poems of a Clare West Briton" (1907), contains many interesting verses and, for all his pro-British feelings, his poetry deserves a higher place in the annals of the literature of Limerick.

Two other writers have Park connections. P.J. ("Cushy") Ryan, author of "The Fourth Siege of Limerick", lived for many years at Cussen's house, at the railway level-crossing gates. But, as far as is known, he never wrote a line about the market gardeners and their way of life.

The other writer, Michael McNamara, is the son of a Parkman and lived in the district for six years between 1952 to 1958, when he emigrated to America. Born in 1940 in the Sandmall, McNamara now teaches creative writing and fiction at the University of Colorado at Denver. Already he has written two novels, "The Vision of Thady Quinlan" (1974) and "The Dancing Floor" (1978). Both books are set in Limerick; one is based on a sandman's family and the other looks at the involvement of two brothers with the Provos.

Michael McNamara knows the life of the Park people intimately. As a young boy, he often helped his father in selling cabbage from a horse-and-cart at the market-place and in Broad Street. If he is ever decides to write a novel on Park, he should be well qualified for the task; the subject matter certainly has all the ingredients for a classic work.

POACHIN' TOM

by Richard Rowley

The Earl he has his mountains,
His deer-park an' demesne,
His grouse upon the heather,
His partridge in the grain,
His trout in lake or river,
An' salmon from the sea.
Och, sport must cost him gold galore,
But all mine's free.

On Slieve-na-Slat at midnight
I wire a cunnin' snare,
Sure that I'll find at dawnin'
A rabbit or a hare.
In Altnadua Lake at dusk
I drop my baited line,
An' ere the dark is lifted
The best o' trout is mine.

Thro' the frosts o' winter
Down by Burren Bog,
I hide myself behind the reeds
Wi' my gun and dog.
Ice twinkles on the water,
The moon shines in the sky,
Then wi' a rush an' whirr o' wings,
The ducks comes by.

God made the mountains,
An' God made the game;
If I take my share o' them,
Am I much to blame?
Some fancies money,
Some courts a girl;
I'm all for sport myself,
Just like the Earl!

A Socialist Notebook

CIVIL RIGHTS — HOW ARE YOU?

by
WILLIAM GALLAHER

It was Saturday. The sun was shining; the day was warm and heavy. People felt sticky, uncomfortable and edgy on city streets choked with shoppers. It was not surprising therefore that the meeting organised by the Socialist Party of Ireland was poorly attended. Middle Abbey Street in Dublin is simply not the place to hold public meetings anymore. People cannot stop and listen; if they do they make it difficult for shoppers to get up or down that street or O'Connell Street, as traditionally the junction of the two streets is speakers' corner.

There were four members of the Socialist Party, three men and a woman; the woman sold their satirical paper "Superspi". They had come there to put their party and their policies to the Saturday shoppers and strollers. They were two speakers and they spoke from a green kitchen chair.

While the first speaker was addressing the passing crowds, a group of Civil Rights demonstrators set out on a galumph from the G.P.O., protesting at the conditions in H. Block in Long Kesh prison. The protestors had a strange way of proceeding: this motley group of about fifteen, including women and children, set off on a trot, cardboard placards hanging from their necks, around the corner of the post office, into a lane, out of a lane, out on to Abbey Street. They successively walked, trotted and ran, shouting unintelligible slogans out of unison and in general yahooping up and down streets accompanied by two or three trotting guards.

The members of the Irish Civil Rights Association that demonstrate on Dublin's streets are the meanest looking political activists I have seen in my fifty odd years. A right crowd of defenders of democracy! The least the Provisionals could do with the bank money is to hire some genuine-looking rent-a-crowd for this work.

This gallant band made straight for the Socialist Party meeting on their trot back down the street. They demanded the right to speak, heckled the speaker and generally took over the meeting. The Socialist Party has always openly opposed Provisionalism and the speaker called the disrupters fascists. They called him a fascist because he would not hand them the microphone; he sensibly enough pointed out to them that they had their own pitch in front of the G.P.O. The little Socialist Party group were obviously shaken by the abuse, the threats and the filthy language of the thugs. The gardai moved on the Provos after some time, being careful not to provoke an incident. The socialists behaved with dignity and courage. The civil rightists made a further contribution to the discrediting of Provisionalism and republicanism.

JASKIN LODGE

I was recently in Bettystown, Co. Meath. It is a seaside village, a very depressing one, with a great expanse of mud flats which some people believe is a beach. Further down the road there is another seaside village called Laytown, a huddle of timber chalets and rundown old houses. Further north is Mornington and halfway between Bettystown and Mornington Sinn Fein, the Workers' Party, has its 'school'. I had heard of this school, so being in the area and having nothing better to do except look at hundreds of cars parked on the dreadful beach at Bettystown, I decided to have a look at it. "Down the beach road at the Tower Stores", said the man in the pub. "You'll see it on the right".

So down the beach road I go, past the Tower Stores I knew it was somewhere about because the Provisionals had daubed the ruined walls of an old building with their usual highly imaginative slogans; here they were provocative in intent. The lane was a sleepy residential place with about half-a-dozen

houses but I couldn't find anything that resembled a school. The young mother pushing the pram had never heard of any such school and gave the impression that she had no wish to now or in the foreseeable future.

Eventually, after going down to the beach and having looked about unsuccessfully and being on the point of giving up, I asked another woman. Yes, she knew where it was. "Over the bridge on the left; it's called Jaskin Lodge. The I.R.A. come down from Belfast to rest there but I don't think they come down anymore now", she said.

Half the country, and I'm not exaggerating, don't know the difference between Provisionals and the Officials. I knew a branch secretary of the I.T.G.W.U. who in the years I was friendly with him could never distinguish one group from the other, nor their policies, and at the end of each discussion would happily settle for Sinn Feiners. "Sure anyway they're all Sinn Feiners", he concluded.

Over the bridge and on the left there was a nondescript, single storey house. The woman had said that the name was on the gate and so it was: "Jaskin Lodge", a dark derelict old place. There were four or five caravans parked in a field around the back but there was no sign of life or activity anywhere. The 'school' symbolises the party; mountains groaning and mice coming forth.

The idea is excellent: every socialist party should have a school if it were possible. However, with respect, I cannot see an Irish Gramsci or a Togliatti emerging from the Jaskin Lodge academy.

When I got back on the main road to the north I had a large whiskey to shake off that depressing corner of Co. Meath.

AT THE BASTILLE

I was in Paris in September 1975 when three Basque guerrillas were executed by Franco. Feeling was high amongst the French Left; there were riots and the stoning and the bombing of Spanish government buildings. The French recalled their ambassador to Spain and even Liam Cosgrave's conservative government in Dublin growled diplomatically at Madrid.

Our gardai have often been accused of brutality and there have been cases of brutality here. The garda force has rotten apples within the ranks but, as a police force, most of its members have the respect and support of the citizens because they behave as police officers should. Not so the French. The French have a riot police which is politicized, composed of a good number of North Africans, and they frequently go on the streets seeking confrontation.

I was walking on the Boulevard San Michele on the first night of the disturbances when a riot police squad surrounded me, banging their-riot sticks on their shields. After I had said who I was and what I was doing they still stood around in a menacing fashion, until it must have dawned on one of the more intelligent of them that a man in a business suit with a spreading paunch, who was on the wrong side of thirty-five was not likely to be seeking violent confrontations. So they let me be and raced off down the famous street chasing the usual assorted group of students, anarchists and ultra-leftists.

A few evenings later the socialists of Western Europe announced a march to the Place de Bastille to protest at the executions. Two hours before the march was due to start, the Parisian Communists had erected a speakers platform, tested

the acoustics and placed three mock coffins on red draped catafalques with blown-up photographs of the executed men backing them on a prominent place to the right of the platform. The march was estimated at 100,000 and the Communist parties of Spain, Italy and France were represented by large contingents and senior party officials. The principal speaker was George Marchais, general secretary of the French party. I have never seen a more disciplined march: marshals shepherded each group, and the individual parties had responsibility for their own members. The stewards flanked the groups and the march moved in square formations up the wide boulevard. There were slogans and marching feet and tight control. However, I had noticed that the shopkeepers and cafe owners had boarded and locked up. They knew what was coming.

Marchais was about half-way through his speech when it began: there had been a helicopter hovering overhead and that flew out of sight; as soon as it did the canisters of tear-gas came raining on to the street from behind the speakers platform — Giscards democracy in operation. The crowd began to scatter, running in all directions to escape the gas. Some ran back the way they had come; others went down side streets; more raced down the steps into the metro station. Most of the foreigners headed for the metro as it was the quickest way to get out of the area. But, as we went down the stairs, the gas canisters followed and innocent commuters, innocent of even attending the demonstration, coughed and cried their way home from the office.

I fell in with a group from the Portuguese party and got a first-hand account on the situation in Portugal as well as anecdotes and stories about life in that country and an account of the life of Alvaro Cunhal. We spent a most enjoyable night in a delightful French cafe and parted in the knowledge that we would never meet again.

MICK LIPPER : THE SILENT T.D.

It is well over a year now since Mick Lipper, with the support of Fr. Seamus Power, Sisters Pauline, Martina and Cecilia, Bishop Jeremiah Newman and Catholic Church controlled organisations in Limerick, defeated the socialist

candidate, Jim Kemmy. Lipper's contribution to Irish political life has been silence. Nothing new about that: it is the normal backbencher role. In Mick Lipper's case it might seem all the more desirable: Stevie Coughlan lost his seat because he talked too much.

The survival kit of your average backbencher is simple. Patronage: you do a favour and win a vote, give a job and buy a family, help advance a business enterprise and gain rich backers. The backbencher does not speak on national issues; he speaks on local issues, but only after he has sounded out the majority view of the constituents. If he is a Labour T.D., he makes no attempt to advance the party; he just consolidates his own base.

If he's in Fianna Fail, he has to be seen to promote the party. He surrounds himself with a small clique, preferably family, and these become the machine.

The Labour man broadens his base; he seeks the support of businessmen and farmers — if he can get them — and will secretly advance their ends to the detriment of the workers. He is a church-goer, a supporter of local teams, interested in the popular sport of the constituency, never disturbs sacred cows, never comes in conflict with monolithic organisations like the G.A.A., Comhaltas, Conradh na Gaeilge, etc., remains one of the lads, yet a little distanced, avoids controversy and only takes sides in a conflict when there is no other option. He drinks but not too much, involves himself secretly in commerce or farming, is not totally opposed to republicans; in fact, he is not totally for or against anyone or anything.

He ends up believing in nothing really, supporting or opposing nothing with conviction; he is the proverbial all things to all men. He becomes a man without a soul, a cypher. His loyalty is to himself and he has one aim — to be re-elected. In two words — Mick Lipper.

**GET THE
LIMERICK SOCIALIST
EVERY MONTH**

JOHN KELLY OF LISTOWEL

BY JOHN CASEY

In the nineteen-forties there was a man in Listowel called John Kelly, a carpenter. Kelly was a master craftsman and, like many intelligent tradesmen, widely read. He was invited to stand for the Labour Party in the elections. Kelly lived in Cliveragh, on the estate of Lord Listowel. Before the polling day, on the Sunday before to be exact, the parish priest of Listowel, Fr. Brennan denounced Kelly as an agent of Russia and told the people not to vote for him. He claimed that Kelly had quoted, at a meeting held in the town, from the works of Communist writers, Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky. Kelly had indeed quoted from both at a little rally of his small band of supporters, a shoemaker, a few labourers, and some craftsmen like himself.

Needless to say, Kelly was not elected. Listowel is as conservative a town as there is in Kerry, but more important, Labour has never made a comeback in the town. There has never been a Labour branch or club there since Kelly's denouncement. It would be, however, giving Fr. Brennan an importance he does not deserve to credit him with blocking Labour in the town. That distinction must go to Dan Spring, the Kerry T.D., who has never encouraged the setting up of one, either through some tacit agreement with the Lynches, the Fine Gael family, or with Fianna Fail when 'Tull' Moloney was the town's T.D., or, more likely still, because Spring never encouraged the setting up of a club because he has never been

interested in promoting a party, just in securing re-election, which is quite a separate question.

However, Kelly's elections campaign did have a humorous side. There was a character in the town called Baldy Flavin. Baldy had no great interest in politics but for the crack wrote to the then Russian Foreign Minister, Malik, and got an acknowledgement. He went about the town showing off the letter and Brennan labelled him an agent of Russian Communism. Baldy was the grandson of Humphrey Flavin, one of Listowel's most famous Parnellites and Baldy's father kept a bookshop to which some of the towns writers have acknowledged their indebtedness.

Fr. Brennan is best remembered as the priest on whom Bryan McMahon based the character of the clergyman in his novel "Children of the Rainbow". Rev. Brennan had described a local McCarthy girl as carrying a republican puppy around in her belly. The young girl was a free spirit and she had conceived a child for a young man who had died before he could marry her. The girl herself died in childbirth and the good priest refused to allow her body into the church. People who protested were branded as atheists by the parish priest.

The McCarthy family are not unknown today and it is doubtful if they have forgotten Brennan. Nor did John Kelly, the Labour candidate; he never darkened church nor chapel for the rest of his life, having seen the Church as the backward political organisation it was and it still is.

SOCIALIST CAMPAIGN

On Friday 14th July, a public meeting was held in Dublin to launch a new pressure group called Socialists Against Nationalism. The group is comprised of the British and Irish Communist Organisation, the Socialist Party, the Limerick Socialist Organisation and individual socialists. At the meeting socialists were encouraged to join this campaign to promote class politics in Ireland.

After ten years of a military and political campaign against the Union, a United Ireland is no nearer. In fact, now that Northern Ireland is being integrated into the U.K. Republicanism is further from success than at any time in the past. The clear wish of the majority of people is Northern Ireland to remain citizens of the United Kingdom remains unchanged. Just like all previous military and political campaigns designed to overcome Ulster unionism, the war of the last ten years have failed.

The war has worsened the position of the Catholic minority in Northern Ireland, who were treated as a fifth column of Southern anti-partitionism. It has destroyed any possibility of united working class politics in the North and further delayed the development of class, as opposed to nationalist, politics in the South. It has caused thousands of futile injuries and deaths and at times presented the threat of a full scale civil war.

Meanwhile southern politics remains dominated by bourgeois politicians who have neither the will nor the ability to tackle the huge problems facing Southern society. Haughey and Lynch have been able to avoid these problems by whipping up frenzy of hate against the Brits and the Prods. Cosgrave and Fitzgerald boasted openly that Sunningdale was the first step to a United Ireland. The Labour Party cannot

decide whether to imitate Fitzgerald or Lynch, while its vote in Dublin drops in election after election. The leaders of our trade union movement have joined in the chorus of Catholic nationalist whining.

All for what? So that Catholic law and a Catholic State can exist in all of Ireland. So that idealistic and committed young people who are reared on nationalism can blow a pub full of Ulster workers to smithereens. So that the political energy can be sapped from young workers in trying to fulfil the dreams of De Valera, Lynch, Haughey and FitzGerald. So that hundreds of politically conscious workers will spend years in jails in both Britain and Ireland. So that Ireland remains the only country in Europe where the socialist movement is an insignificant joke. And most of those socialists that do exist spend their energy hating other workers instead of hating their own bourgeoisie. Irish workers have a good history of political activity, willingness to fight very hard in political conflicts and make tremendous sacrifices. If only it was all pitted against our mean, sly, Catholic bourgeoisie.

The call for a 32-county Socialist Republic is nothing more than the old nationalism newly dressed in a socialist guise. Those socialists who support this call fight for and demand a British withdrawal. In this they, therefore, stand right behind the Southern bourgeoisie. The campaigns of one and the other dovetail and become indistinguishable. First — they won't succeed! That is now clear for all with eyes to see. Second — they fail, not because of the Brits, as they maintain, but because they are going against the clear wishes of the majority in Northern Ireland to remain in the United Kingdom. Third — they can give no good reasons why a British withdrawal would result in a Socialist rather than a capitalist United Ireland. Fourth — they can give no good reason why there wouldn't be a total civil war.

The national press and the spokesmen of the bourgeoisie have now taken to pious condemnation of those who have become involved in the military campaign against Ulster Unionism. Having reared them in school as Catholic nationalists and described the war against the Prods and the Brits as the ultimate in heroism, the Catholic clergy now call those fools who believed them "terrorists", "animals", "inhuman", and "psychopaths". Liberals have formed all sorts of "Reconciliation", "communication" and "Christian" outfits to rehabilitate the "animals". They never question the aims only the "means"; they never challenge the politicians who gain politically from keeping the conflict on the boil. This pious moral condemnation of those who fight, kill and get killed is useless and is not the business of Socialists Against Nationalism. The liberals and clergy oppose nationalism because it troubles their sensibilities; we are against it because it is delaying the advent of class politics. Our aim is to be the ones to trouble their sensibilities.

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